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ABSTRACT

Support staff of circulation, reference, interlibrary loan, media services, special collections, information, and reserves make up a large portion of library work forces, and each year are asked to take on more tasks, many requiring advanced skills. This study determined: (1) if there is an actual need for continuing education for support staff; and (2) how to meet these needs. A 26-question survey, covering professional competence, patron service, relationships with colleagues, and personal development was sent to public service support staffs in Ohio academic libraries. Ninety-one employees responded (60% return rate), and rated participating in continuing education as being "very important" in order to improve their knowledge or skills of library activities (88%); to develop new professional knowledge and skills (85%); to keep abreast of new developments in the position (74%); to accommodate more effectively the needs of the patrons (71%); to become more competent at work (67%); and to become more productive (67%). The results, compared with an earlier similar study, show that support staffs want and need continuing education. Recommendations to administrators include: improving communication and encouragement, being sensitive to employees' needs, offering in-service programs, and supporting workshop and conference attendance. Survey data is presented in nine tables, and appendices include copies of the questionnaire, letter to public service support staff members, letter of permission, and written survey comments. (Contains 13 references.) (MAS)

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THE BENEFITS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PUBLIC SERVICE SUPPORT STAFF IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN THE STATE OF OHIO

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Library Science

BY

Mary Kathryn Ball

December, 1994

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Abstract

Support staff make up a major portion of the work force in libraries. This is very evident in the public service areas of academic libraries. As new technology and procedures are introduced, support staff must receive training. Continuing education provides many opportunities to learn new techniques, receive training and help with adjustments to seemingly constant change in their work environments. The survey methodology was used for this study. A questionnaire consisiting of twenty-six questions was sent to public service support staff in Ohio academic libraries. The responses to the questionnaire allow for comparisons between the different academic libraries and with two previous studies using similiar questionnaires by Groteluschen and Smith and Burgin. From this information, library managers and directors should be able to establish staff development and continuing education programs for their support staffs. The results of the survey should lead to future continuing education programs and opportunities for support staff.

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Mary K. Ball

December 1994

Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Problem and Need for the Study

Business and industry have long realized the importance of the need for continuing education for their support staffs. A highly trained and skilled support staff provide the necessary requirements to compete in the business world. Libraries have only begun to awaken to this concept.

Support staff make up a major portion of library work forces. Each year these workers are asked to take on more tasks, many requiring advanced skills, without additional training or support. Morale declines as does the desire to work as a "team member." Support staff feel less and less a part of the "team" and more and more like "cogs" in a factory.

Support staff need continuing education opportunities: those that will allow them to "grow" in their respective fields, increase job skills, and increase interest and participation in departmental activities. Given the opportunities to participate in continuing education programs that will enable them to learn new skills and to participate in the many changes occurring in their respective public service departments, library support staff will contribute to the continuing development of their departments and in library decision-making.

Support staff are the "front lines" for libraries. While continuing with their current responsibilities, they are also

taking on additional tasks and adjusting to continuous changes. Continuing education opportunities have been available for professional librarians for years whereas similar opportunities are lacking for support staff. This study was conducted to determine (1) if there is an actual need for continuing education for support staff and (2) how to meet these needs if the opportunities arise.

Chapter 2

Methodology

The survey methodology was used for this study. A self-administered questionnaire with twenty-six questions including a "Participation Reasons Scale" was the tool of choice (Appendix A). This anonymous questionnaire was sent to the public service support staffs in Ohio academic libraries. This type of library was chosen because of the many innovations introduced to these libraries in computer technology, software, and increased patron demands. Addresses for support staff were obtained through the help of ALAO (Academic Library Association of Ohio). ALAO has many support staff among its membership. Each questionnaire had a stamped, self-addressed envelope so that the respondents could return the questionnaire at their convenience.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, "support staff" is defined as those employed in positions not requiring a Master of Library Science degree. These positions include library paraprofessionals, technicians, and assistants. The phrase "continuing education" refers to workshops, in-services, conferences, conventions, credit and non-credit course work which are library related.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted in academic institutions in Ohio. Only support staffs from public service areas were surveyed. These areas include reference and circulation. Employees working in other areas such as technical services were not surveyed. This is done to limit the sample size and the amount of responses received. Likewise, public libraries were not included in this survey. The findings in this study cannot be generalized to all academic libraries or libraries in general.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

The "Participation Reasons Scale" was used for this study. It was adapted from a similar study conducted by Smith and Burgin (1991). Twenty-six of thirty statements were taken from the Smith and Burgin survey and used in this survey. Some of the statements were edited to fit the need of the survey for support staff.

Survey questions covered several areas: Professional Competence, Patron Service, Relationships with Colleagues and Personal Development.

Surveys were returned and tabulated and the results reported in this paper. The results proved enlightening. Support staff need continuing education opportunities in order to perform well at their jobs, relate to co-workers and to keep up with the latest technologies.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

This literature review was completed by searching several on-line catalogs and databases. The Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) used included The University of Akron's Ziplink and OHIOLINK. Databases searched included LISA, ERIC, ABI/INFORM, Library Literature and Wilsonline. Kent State University's School of Library and Information Science Dissertation Index was also included in this search.

Much has been written about the benefits of continuing education opportunities for library professionals. Workshops, in-services and conferences provide library professionals with access to new technologies, the latest theories in practice and occasions to become re-acquainted with one's colleagues in the field. Little has been done, however, in regards to the development of an often forgotten and overlooked group--the paraprofessionals or support staff.

Many books and articles published in the last decade reflect the need and importance of continuing education for professional librarians. Hegg (1985) studied the need of continuing education for academic librarians. Her study focused on the librarians' needs assessment in furthering their skills. Job satisfaction was a major concern for the development of continuing education programs. Those attending conferences reported greater job

satisfaction after taking the programs. Hegg also surveyed those librarians not attending conferences. A low job satisfaction rating was reported from those not attending the conferences.

Continuing with the idea of job satisfaction, another article deals with developing bibliographic instruction skills--an important commodity used by academic librarians. Smith (1982) surveyed instruction librarians in Pennsylvania to determine how education and training would benefit bibliographic instruction. These librarians felt continuing education programs, in-service training, and the like were the best means of acquiring appropriate training. Most noted these opportunities were the best methods to improve their teaching techniques.

In a nearby state, James Neal, a noted authority on library personnel and training, writes on his study conducted in New York State. Neal (1980) surveyed librarians at the City University of New York (CUNY). Librarians at CUNY viewed continuing education as a source of more effective job performance, challenge, creativity and satisfaction. A positive relationship between continuing education activities and mutual work experiences was also found. Neal states that academic librarians, faced with new trends, technologies and increased patron expectations, feel the need to seek out opportunities to update skills whenever possible. Although the study took place over ten years ago, the results are still relevant to library managers and administrators.

The 1980s brought many sweeping technological changes to libraries. These changes especially affected support staffs. With change comes fear--fear of new technologies which is also connected with the fear of losing one's job to these new innovations. Jones (1989) reports that paraprofessionals and clerical employees are frustrated and anxious when adjusting to new technological changes and procedures in their jobs. Many reported feeling apprehensive and stressful when faced with learning new computer skills. Most respondents felt that training sessions and workshops greatly reduced their fears and anxieties and eased them into the changes they were facing. Positive attitudes towards change and increased job productivity were the results from this study.

Continuing education is important for libraries. But it must go beyond the in-service sessions and workshops. Newly acquired skills and processes must be applied or they will be quickly lost. Shaughnessy (1988) stressed the importance of efficacy in continuing education programs. By studying the dynamics of the group or organization, library administrators can integrate their goals with the appropriate methods. Otherwise, Shaughnessy writes, the good skills learned from the conferences and in-services will fade. Opportunities must be made for self-assessment. Only then will staff development programs succeed.

Turner (1992) feels that paraprofessionals are often mismanaged and overlooked when decisions are made. Staff should be considered in training and development. Once staff begin to

play a role in decision making, they will less likely view changes and newly introduced technology as a threat to their job security. Not only should staff participate in the development of their individually set goals and objectives, but they should also take part in the evaluation process as well.

Herbert S. White, a prolific writer in the field of library personnel, continues to support the idea of continuing education and the necessity for upgrading skills. White (1984) feels that support for continuing education must not only come from the library administration, but also from the participants as well. Motivation is the key for success when pursuing continuing education. Continuing education is crucial to the profession. A plan must be developed which meets the needs of all participants.

Grotelueschen (1985) surveyed professionals such as doctors, lawyers and business people as to their attitudes about job performance and continuing education. Grotelueschen discovered that these professionals were concerned with acquiring new skills and learning new procedures to enable them to do their jobs in a more efficient fashion. Job enhancement meant more than salary enhancement to these respondents.

Smith and Burgin (1991) adapted a version of Grotelueschen's Participation Scale for their research. Respondents felt that "increased job skills" and "improved patron service" rated the highest in their survey over such other motivating factors as "personal and financial gain." Paraprofessionals rated the need for education and training higher than their professional

counterparts. Paraprofessionals receive most of their training on-site rather than in the classroom--thus the desire to update skills is greater.

Many books written on library personnel discuss the importance of staff development. This has become an important issue in the light of the many changes affecting libraries today: budget cuts, personnel cuts and the introduction of new technologies. Jennifer Cargill and Gisela M. Webb study the benefits of staff development in their book, **Managing Libraries in Transition** (1988). Relevant continuing education and training programs are based on staff development needs and assessments (changes in job responsibilities, training for newly acquired equipment, and so on) performed annually. They also emphasized the need for upgrading skills and job enhancement as important reasons for continuing education.

Herbert S. White, in his book, **Library Personnel Management** (1985) , sees continuing education as an investment that will pay off in the future. Skills and training acquired today, coupled with opportunities to utilize what has been learned, will benefit not only the participant, but the library itself. Libraries can offer continuing education through a variety of sources. Among them are the institution itself, the professional societies and vendors.

A major publication written for and by paraprofessionals is **Library Mosaics**. Since its conception in the early 1990s, **Library Mosaics** continues to feature articles for and by library

paraprofessionals in all fields and in all types of libraries. The majority of the articles are not scholarly but deal with the issues and concerns of importance to paraprofessionals. This periodical is considered unique in its approach to support staff. Continuing education, the rapidly changing technologies and added job responsibilities due to these changes are among the many topics discussed in this periodical.

Chapter 4

Survey Results

One hundred fifty surveys were sent to members of ALAO (The Academic Library Association of Ohio). Of the 114 that were returned, twenty-three surveys (15%) were discounted because the respondents did not fit the sample, meaning that some were employed in the Technical Services Departments of their libraries or were employed as librarians. ninety-one surveys qualified for the sample for a return rate of sixty percent (60%).

Demographics

The survey instrument asked respondents to specify the public service department in which they are employed (Table 1). Thirty-six percent are employed in the Circulation Department, thirty-eight percent in Reference and twenty-one are employed in other departments related to public service such as Interlibrary Loans, Audio-Visual, Special Collections, Information, and Reserves.

Seventy-six percent of the respondents are employed in the two major public service departments in academic libraries. Many respondents reported that they had developed skills and training allowing them to work in several departments.

Respondents were also asked to specify the number of years they were employed in their present position (Table 2). These responses were grouped into four categories: less than one year, one year to five years, five years to ten years and ten years or more.

Most of the respondents reported working in their positions for more than five years. Thirty (32%) reported working five years or more; and Twenty-four (26%) reported being employed in their present position for ten years or more. Summarily, those responding to this survey are experienced and knowledgeable in their positions.

The survey also asked respondents to report the highest degree earned. The majority of respondents have earned at least a bachelors degree. However, eighty-two respondents (90%) have earned degrees at the the Masters level among which are two respondents who have law degrees but do not practice law (Table 3). These results are interesting especially when compared with levels of experience. Not only do the respondents have many years of experience, they also possess the education as well.

Analysis of The Participation Reasons Scale

The Participation Reasons Scale used in this study asked respondents to react to twenty-six statements for participating in continuing education activities. Each statement was evaluated on a seven-point scale ranging from 1-2 (not important); 3-5 (moderately important); and 6 to 7 (very important). Table 4 contains those responses receiving endorsements of 6-7 (very important) and Table 5 contains those responses receiving low endorsements of 1-3 (not very important).

Statements With Highest Endorsements

The statement rated the highest was "To Further Improve My Knowledge or Skills of Library Activities." Eighty-one (88%) of the respondents chose this as very important. Support staff see this as an important factor in the pursuit of their job skills. The statement,"To Develop New Professional Knowledge and Skills " also received high endorsements. Eighty-five percent of the respondents ranked this statement as very important. This reinforces the statement on improving skills. Not only do support staff want to improve their knowledge and skills, they also want to develop new professional knowledge and skills. Additionally, then, support staff ranked the statement, "To Help Me keep Abreast of New Developments in My Position" as very important. Seventy-four percent felt this was an important issue. Not only do support staff want to develop their current knowledge and skills and learn about new trends and techniques, they also want to keep up with the latest developments. The statement, "To Accommodate More Effectively the Needs of Patrons" would be reinforced by the previous statements. Seventy-two percent of the respondents rated this statement as very important. In order to serve patrons well, support staff would need to know the latest trends in research and be able to use the latest technology. The statement, "To Help Me Become More Competent in My Work" received a slightly lower ranking of 68%. This statement reinforces those above. Support staff want to be effective and competent in their jobs, knowing how to use the latest equipment and being aware of

patron needs is essential. Finally, the statement, "To Help Me Be More Productive in My Job Position" summarizes this table. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents rated this as very important. Again, support staff need to be effective and productive in their jobs in order to serve patrons efficiently and consistently. Continuing education will allow support staff to perform their jobs to their satisfaction.

Support staff want do well in their respective positions and serve their patrons well. The high responses for this section reflect this. The desire to continually improve and seek out new skills proves the need for support staff to pursue continuing education opportunities to be effective.

Statements with Low Endorsements

Not all statements received high endorsements or ratings of very important. Support staff view some areas quite differently than others. These areas are discussed in more detail in later analyses. Table 5 lists the six statements receiving the lowest endorsements.

The statement, "To Help Family and Friends with Library Service" received a low ranking. Thirty-five percent of the respondents felt this area was not as important as patron service. The statement, "To Enhance the Image of My Profession" also received a low ranking. Seventeen percent felt this issue was not as important as others. The statement, "To Increase the Likelihood of Receiving a Raise in Salary" also received a low

ranking. Eleven percent felt this issue was not important. The statement, "To Sharpen My Perspective of My Position", received a low ranking as well. Ten percent of the respondents felt this issue was not important to them as a whole. Likewise, the statement, "To Reflect on the Value of My Library Responsibilities" received a thirteen percent endorsement as not important. Analyses of Tables 6 and 7 discuss these issues further.

Areas of Competency

The twenty-six responses were divided into three areas covering the various areas affecting continuing education. Statements Regarding Professional Competence; Statements Regarding Patron Service; and Statements Regarding Colleagues. Smith and Burgin utilized similar groups labeled "components" in their survey results: Professional Competence; Patron Service; Collegiality; and Professional Concerns.

Statements Regarding Professional Competence (Table 6) reflect the interest support staff have in their respective positions. The statement, "Developing New Professional Knowledge and Skills" received a highly rated response as very important 6-7 (85%). Support staff feel that knowing and developing new skills is very essential for the work place. The statement, "To Help Me Keep Abreast of New Developments in My Position" received a very high endorsement of seventy-four percent as many respondents ranked this as very important. This statement and its ranking may

speak to the need of support staff to participate in continuing education activities which allows support staff to do what they need to do and to help them do their jobs more efficiently. The statement, "To Help Me Become More Competent in My Work" perhaps illustrates the pride and interest support staff have in maintaining skills and responsibilities relating to their jobs. The statement, "To Help Me Be More Productive in My Job Position" also reinforces this desire to well in one's position. This statement received an endorsement of sixty-seven percent as well. Support staff want to be more productive and they want their patrons to be served well. The statement, "To Develop Proficiencies Necessary to Maintain Quality Performance" received a high response rate of sixty-two percent (6-7) suggesting that support staff are expressing a desire to increase their job skills in order to perform better at work and to provide improved service as well. The statement, "To Maintain the Quality of My Library Service" likewise was rated as very important, for the respondents answering 6-7 (56%). This response reinforces the desire of support staff to provide patrons with good quality service.

The second section, **Statements Regarding Patron Service** (Table 7), supports the first section. Interestingly, the statement "To Help Increase the Likelihood that Patrons are Better Served" ranked high with a 62% percent response rate. Librarians are often characterized as helpful and nurturing. Perhaps support staff who work in public service positions also

possess many of these characteristics. A genuine need and desire to help patrons is also evident in the responses support staff have given this survey. The statement, "To Increase My Skills in Dealing with Patrons", also ranked high receiving a 63% respondent rate as very important. The remaining statements regarding meeting patron expectation, accommodating patron needs, and improving patron service also received high marks as very important to the respondents. These results may also reinforce the need for support staff to be nurturing and supportive much like their professional counterparts.

Statements Regarding Colleagues, contains statements associated with professional colleagues, such as the statement, "To be Challenged By the Thinking of Library Colleagues" which was rated as moderately important (3-5) received a 34% response rate. Respondents view associations with colleagues as an important part of their working environments. The statement, "To Mutually Exchange Thoughts With My Colleagues" had a higher ranking. Forty-four percent of the respondents rated this statement as very important (6-7). Support staff, like their professional counterparts, enjoy learning from each other. This idea is reinforced by the statement, "To Learn From Others With Similar Jobs or Positions". Sixty-eight percent of the respondents to this survey rated this as very important. Discussing related problems and ideas is also helpful for support staff.

In contrast, the statement, "To Relate My Ideas to My Peers" was not as highly rated. Only 20% of the respondents felt this issue was very important. This may speak to the nature of support staff themselves. Relating and discussing ideas with one's peers is valued, yet when it comes to discussing one's own ideas, support staff do not feel as valued and respected in this area. These feelings of inadequacy may come from the support staff or from their professional colleagues who do not view them as equals in the library field and therefore, their opinions and ideas are unimportant.

The statement,, "To Develop Leadership Capabilities" received a higher rating of 50%. Respondents felt this was an area of professional development in which they wanted to participate. Support staff also need to be involved in their staff associations and similar library organizations in order to feel a part of the profession. Many support staff represent their co-workers in staff associations on many levels including the national level within the ALA (American Library Association).

The statement, "To Sharpen My Perspective of My Position" received a 48% rating from respondents as very important (6-7) The ratings from this statement is interesting. This statement and its results reinforce those from previous statements discussed above. Support staff find association with colleagues, comparing ideas and participating in professional organizations valuable and rewarding. Yet, when they rank statements relating

directly to themselves and their personal work situations, support staff do not view themselves as important.

The final statement in this table, the statement, "To Enhance the Image of My Profession" relates directly to this idea. Only 31% of the respondents viewed this statement as very important. Despite the need of support staff to be viewed as "professionals" by their colleagues and the professional librarians, support staff do not feel they are looked upon as such in the library profession. Support staff may receive little or no support from library department heads and directors which may explain why support staff see themselves as unimportant and feel neglected when needs for continuing education arise.

Statements Regarding Personal Development contains statements relating to personal and financial gain, professional advancement, job security and benefits to family and friends (Table 9). Four of these statements show weak endorsements. The statement, "To increase the likelihood of receiving a raise in salary" is a good example of a "weak" endorsement. Respondents gave this statement a 33% endorsement as very important (6-7). Most of the support staff answering this survey are state civil servants. These individuals receive regular salary increments each year, and therefore continuing education courses may not result in an immediate salary increase. Similarly, the statement, "To Enhance My Individual Job Security in My Present Position" received a 28% endorsement as very important (6-7). Most, if not all, civil servant positions are secure once the

employee passes a required probation period. These employees are not likely to be fired or laid off unless emergency budget measures are enacted.

The statement, "To Help Family and Friends With Library Services" received a very low endorsement of 7% as very important (6-7). This may, perhaps, reflect on the fact that support staff in academic libraries have a specific clientele they serve (university students, faculty, and staff) and the needs of family and friends may be better served by public libraries.

The statement, "To Reflect on the Value of My Library Responsibilities" received a 27% endorsement as very important (6-7). Respondents did not feel this was an important issue. The results may be demonstrative of support staff feelings as to their respective positions. They may not feel their jobs or positions are as worthwhile or as important as those of professional librarians.

In contrast, several statements in this table also received higher endorsements. The statement, "To Further Improve My Knowledge or Skills of Library Activities", received an 88% endorsement as very important (6-7). Likewise, the statement, "To Help Me Be More Productive in My Job" earned a 67% endorsement as very important. Both of these statements and their high endorsements illustrate the facts that support staff are interested in improving skills and responsibilities in their respective positions.

The statement, "To Increase the Likelihood of Professional Advancement" received a high rating of 53% with 49 out of 91 individuals viewing this statement as very important (6-7). Respondents felt this was an issue of great importance. Support staff want to use continuing education courses to further professional advancement, if possible, perhaps in forms of reclassification or an adjustment to one's current job responsibilities.

The statement, "To Maintain My Current Abilities" also received a "very important" endorsement. 47% of the respondents viewed this statement as such. Support staff understand the need to keep up with the current technologies and the latest services available to patrons. Quite often, support staff are the first to introduce and assist patrons in the use of such new services.

Finally, the statement, "To Review My Commitment to My Job Position" received a very important rating (6-7) of 42%. Support staff are motivated by doing their jobs well and receiving recognition for it. Patrons also receive the benefits from good service and attention. Thus, continually renewing and updating one's skills is very helpful to not only support staff, but those served by them as well.

Further Analysis

In comparing all five tables, respondents rated statements associated with patron service higher than the other statements. The reasons for this may be associated with the support staff themselves. Most, if not all the support staff who completed the survey are employed as state civil servants. Good job performance is not rewarded with promotions or raises. Job security is often guaranteed once the individual passes his or her probation period. Perhaps satisfying patron needs and acquiring new skills becomes more and more important to them instead of a potential pay raise.

Charles Bunge(1987), reports on the "sources of satisfaction" for all participants, professional and support staff. The top categories and examples provided are very similar to the high endorsements reported in this survey.

Bunge reports that working with patron, working colleagues and learning new things" are considered a means of gaining job satisfaction. Interestingly, he also informs us that a major cause of stress for support staff is poor supervision and management, inadequate training and knowledge, and having little input in decision making.

The results of Bunge's survey and this survey illustrate the need for support staff to participate in continuing education activities. Changes in technology and the stresses involved in maintaining one's skills demonstrates the need for support staff to be actively involved in their continuing education.

Comparisons with Smith and Burgin

Twenty-six of the thirty statements used in this survey were borrowed, with permission, from the Smith and Burgin Participation Reasons Scale (1991). The researchers used a prinicpal component analysis to help reduce a large body of data to a smaller, more manageable set of constructs, they called "components". Smith and Burgin then placed statements into four categories or areas that they wanted to study. For the purposes of this survey, statements and data were placed into three major categories: Statements Regarding Professional Competence, Statements Regarding Patron Service, and Statements Regarding Colleagues.

Smith and Burgin also included in their data results, The Top Reasons for Attending Continuing Education Functions and The Bottom Reasons for Attending Continuing Education Functions. This survey ranks the statements in a slightly different fashion. Table 3 rates those statements that received a "Very Important" Rating, meaning respondents answered the questionnaire using 6 or 7 as "very important". Table 4 rates those statements receiving a low rating as "Not Important", meaning respondents ranked statements by using 1 or 2 in the rating scale.

Many similarities were found between the 1991 study and the one discussed here. Respondents in this survey rated the statement, "To Further Improve My Knowledge or Skills in Library Activities" the highest, whereas respondents to the Smith and Burgin survey rated statement, "To Help Me Become More Competent

in My Library Work" the highest. Interestingly, respondents in both surveys rated many of the statements as "very important" in both surveys.

Support staff want to do well in their jobs. Repsondents want to have opportunities to attend continuing education classes, courses, and workshops. Being competent and maintaining one's skills emphasizes the need for support staff to be good, capable employees. Job satisfaction is fundamental for support staff. The high endorsements in the Professional Competence category demonstrates this.

Other similarities are found in the lower rated statements. Three of the five lowest rated responses in this survey are also listed as "not very important" in the Smith and Burgin survey (see Table 2). Respondents in this survey rated the statement, "To Increase the Likelihood of Benefits for Family and Friends" as not very important (54%); whereas the respondents of the Smith and Burgin survey rated the statement "To Consider the Limitations of My Role as a Librarian" as the lowest rated statement. Incidently, this statement was not used in this survey.

In both surveys, respondents rated the statements concerning patron service as very important. Personal and financial gain was not considered as important, probably because of the state system in which most of the staff are employed. Pay raises are based on a different criteria than those of their professional colleagues. Some respondents may also be reluctant to admit that

a pay raise is a good motivator for taking continuing education courses. Salaries for support staff are considered by some to be low in comparision to the professionals. Opportunities to earn a salary increase would be a great incentive to pursue continuing education courses.

Respondents in both surveys share an interest in professional competence. Both survey results demonstrate the respondents' interests in maintaining good quality library service and developing new professional knowledge and skills.

The last two categories: Statements Regarding Colleagues and Statements Regarding Personal Development are also listed in the Smith and Burgin survey. Respondents in both surveys felt these issues were important, but rated them below the other categories of Patron Service and Personal Competence.

Support staff often see their work neglected and unrecognized. Bungee saw some of this in his study. Support staff are responsible for a high volume of work often without the benefit of supervision, sufficient training or positive reinforcement. Many feel overworked, underpaid and undervalued. Their ideas and suggestions are rebuffed and passed-over. Most support staff want to feel appreciated and respected.

Summary of the Comments

The themes running through the comments made by support staff concern job satisfaction, appreciation for one's work, recognition by professional librarians and opportunities to commiserate with one's colleagues. The comments submitted by support staff participating in this survey are included in the appendices at the end of this paper.

Many respondents commented that personal satisfaction and recognition for a job well done are great motivators for pursuing continuing education opportunities. Others stated that they receive little or no encouragment from their department heads and administrators to attend workshops, in-services and the like. Many find out about such workshops after they are over.

Finding time in one's schedule to attend continuing education programs is a common problem among the paraprofessionals. The comment went on further to state that the needs of those who serve the public are often neglected. Those who could benefit the most from helpful continuing education courses are the least likely to take advantange of the opportunity because of little library support of the fact that they "can't be spared" from library business.

The overall theme of relating ideas and associating with one's peers seems to carry over into the comments as well. Support staff answering this survey felt that exchanging ideas and keeping up with colleagues in the state in which they worked was important. Keeping abreast with one's profession was an

important reason to participate in continuing education programs. One respondent wrote that the paraprofessionals she had met at conferences were dedicated and enthusiastic about their professions. She enjoyed meeting with these fellow "support staffers" and was inspired by their dedication.

Chapter 5

Summary and Implications

Support staff members, employed in the public service departments of academic libraries, have a sincere interest to pursue continuing education. Their reasons and goals are many. Their needs, concerns and desires are quite similar to their professional counterparts.

Staff members need and want to improve their knowledge and skills of library activities. Many respondents commented upon their satisfaction and frustration regarding the pursuit of continuing education.

Based on the results of this survey and the findings of other surveys such as Smith and Burgin's, library administrators, department heads and supervisors should encourage their support staffs in the participation of continuing education and staff development activities.

Employees need to be encouraged to participate in continuing education activities. Those support staff expressing interest in pursuing and participating in continuing education programs should receive time off from their regular work activities. Employees who want to participate in staff associations and perhaps serve as an officer in paraprofessional organizations should not be discouraged. Library administrators will see the benefits not only through employee development, but also through improved patron services.

Supervisors need to improve communication with their employees. Support staff need to be aware of changes occurring in their workplace and they need to have a voice in the making of department policies. Morale will likely increase once support staff have an active role in the development of their job positions.

Supervisors may benefit from continuing education classes themselves. Courses in supervision are applicable here. Many supervisors are often unaware of the lack of attention to employee needs. Support staff concerns are very similar to those of the professionals. Supervisors to be aware of this.

Library administrators need to be mindful of the needs of all of their employees-- professionals and paraprofessionals alike. Continuing education opportunities should be available to everyone who wants to pursue it. Libraries become efficient and better serve their employees when all working at their best. Continuing education should be a part of this process.

Libraries can offer in-service programs for employees allowing them to attend on the premises and on company time. In addition to inservice programs, libraries can offer workshops on campus in conjunction with staff associations and paraprofessional and professional organizations. Many organizations, like The American Library Association have a Support Staff Round-Table that include support staff in its conferences. If membership are too expensive, then, there are other organizations that offer a

low membership and encourage participation from its members at all levels.

Those libraries with adequate budgets should consider sending support staff to annual library conferences. The American Library Association holds two conferences each year. Smaller organizations, like state associations hold conferences annually. The Academic Library Association of Ohio holds an annual conference in November and presents workshops on various topics around the state of Ohio throughout the year. These workshops are one-day sessions on such topics as time management, patron service and managing new technologies.

Since the majority of support staff participating in this survey rated the need to improve patron service as one of the important reasons for pursuing continuing education, not only would support staff benefit, the patrons will likewise see beneficial results from their efforts as well.

Appendix A
Participation Reasons Scale

Directions: There are many reasons for participation in continuing professional education activities. The following items are designed so that you can indicate the relative importance of the general reasons you think you have for participating in continuing education activities. For each item, mark the numeral which best represents the degree of importance you attach to each reason. Do not put your name on this questionnaire. Your anonymity is guaranteed. You may withdraw from participation at any time.

Reasons	Not Important			Moderately Important		Very Important	
1. To further improve my knowledge or skills of library activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. To mutually exchange thoughts with my colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. To help me be more productive in my job position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. To enable me to better meet patron expectations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. To maintain my current abilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. To help family and friends with library service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. To relate my ideas to my peers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. To accommodate more effectively the needs of patrons	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. To review my commitment to my job position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Reasons	Not Important				Moderately Important		Very Important
10. To increase the likelihood of receiving a raise in salary	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. To learn from others with similar jobs or positions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. To help develop leadership capabilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. To increase my skills in dealing with patrons	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. To develop new professional knowledge and skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. To sharpen my perspective of my position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. To help me keep abreast of new developments in your position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. To help increase the likelihood that patrons are better served	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. To help me become more competent in my work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. To increase the likelihood of professional advancement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Reasons	Not Important					Moderately Important	Very Important
20. To be challenged by the thinking of library colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. To enhance the image of my profession	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. To improve my service to the public	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. To develop proficiencies necessary to maintain quality performance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. To enhance my individual job security in my present library position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. To maintain the quality of my library service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. To reflect on the value of my library responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The following information will assist me in comparing this sample to other samples I have collected:

Please check the highest degree you have received:

_____High School _____ Associate Degree

_____Bachelors _____Masters in Library Science

_____Other (please describe) _____

How many years have you been in your present position? _____

In what area of the library do you work?

_____ Circulation _____ Reference

_____other(please describe) _____

Please write any other comments you would like to add to this survey.

Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete this survey. Your contribution and assistance are gratefully appreciated.

Appendix B: Letter to Public Service Support Staff

School of Library and Information Science
(216) 672-2782
Fax 216-672-7965

Kent STATE UNIVERSITY
P. O. Box 5190, Kent, Ohio 44242-0001

Re: The Benefits of Continuing Education for Public Service Support Staff in Academic Libraries in the State of Ohio

September, 1994

Dear Support Staff Member:

I am a graduate student in the School of Library and Information Science at Kent State University. As a part of the requirements for my master's degree I am conducting a study about the benefits of continuing education for public service support staff in academic libraries.

The enclosed questionnaire elicits information that will help me to determine the needs and desires of support staff for continuing education. I would greatly appreciate your cooperation in completing the accompanying questionnaire.

Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed as you do not need to sign your name to the questionnaire. Only the investigator has access to the survey data. There is no penalty of any kind if you should choose not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from the survey. Participation is entirely voluntary. A copy of the results of the survey will be available upon request.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at (216) 972-6355 or (216) 928-7301. My research advisor is Dr. Richard Rubin, who can be reached at (216) 672-2782. If you have any further questions regarding research at Kent State University, you may contact Dr. Eugene Wenninger, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, st (216) 672-2851.

Thank you very much for your cooperation; it is much appreciated. You may return the questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed envelope to me at the following address:

Mary K. Ball
1261 Front St.
Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio 44221

Sincerely,

Mary K. Ball

Mary K. Ball
Graduate Student

School of Library and Information Sciences

Ms. Mary K. Ball
1261 Front Street
Cuyahoga Falls OH 44221

Dear Ms. Ball:

Please feel free to use the questionnaire at the end of the article by Burgin and Smith, "The Motivations of Professional and Paraprofessional Librarians for Participating in Continuing Education Programs." We are happy that you found our work to be interesting.

We would also be interested in the results of your work and would appreciate if you could send us an abstract or some summary of your findings.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Robert Burgin

Robert Burgin
Associate Professor
School of Library and Information Sciences
North Carolina Central University
Durham NC 27707
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Appendix D: Written Comments on Survey

Written Comments

Many respondents also included some written comments. They are listed below in random order.

1. Unfortunately, in my situation, continuing education/career development workshops contribute **NOTHING** to salary advancement. Personal satisfaction and a job well done are really the key motivators for continuing education; but the most enjoyable part is the networking and schmoozing. I think in my experience, MLS supervisors tend to believe paraprofessionals go to workshops primarily to get out of work--but I think this is no more common for us than for her.

2. There does not seem to be any encouragement or commitment to continuing education by this institution for support staff.

3. Another reason I like participating in activities is the chance to travel to other academic libraries and see first hand **how** their library is set up (physically) in addition to discussion similar problems, challenges, and or remedies we may encounter. It is really eye opening sometimes. Also it lets you know you're not alone!

4. I do not feel that an MLS is absolutely necessary in the performance of one's job, especially considering some of the examples of people with an MLS who are incompetent at their jobs; some being administrative. It can be very discouraging. Some schools are not teaching their students the skills, etc. they will need in the "real world". Library Schools need to take a good look at what is really going on the field of library science--especially in the academic and private sector!-- Wake up people!

5. All members of the Support Staff at our library try to attend meetings for Professional Development. The problem is the scheduling and finding [time] to go. We do want to feel important and valued but often times we are an after thought. Like many other professions those that have the most public contact are lowest in consideration of needs. I do love my job and the contact with the public. I am not often this dark in my opinion, but reality is always there.

6. It's wonderful now that there are so many paraprofesisonal conferences. The people I've met at these conferences are extremely dedicated to their work in their libraries. I think librarians are **starting** to appreciate the amount of commitment these paraprofessionals have to libraries.

7. Participation in professional continuing education helps support staff relate better to librarians (as well as peers) and creates a sense of "belonging to the profession" that was not available in the 70s and early 80s to support staff.

Table 1
Respondents Employed in Public Service
N=91

Department	n/%
Circulation	33/36
Reference	37/40
Other	21/23
More Than One Dept.	17/18
Total	108/91

Table 2
Respondents Reporting Number of Years Worked in Their Present Postions
N=91

Years In Present Position	n%
Less than 1 Yr.	9/9
1 Yr. - 5 Yrs.	28/30
5 Yrs.-10 Yrs.	30/32
10 Yrs. Or More	24/26

Table 3
Respondents Reporting Highest Degree Earned
N=91

Degree	n/%
High School	9/9
Associate	8/8
Bachelors	41/45
MLS	16/17
Other	17/18

Table 4
Statements Receiving Endorsements of 6-7 (Very Important)
1-2 = Not Important 3-5 = Mod. Important 6-7 = Very Important
N=91

Statement	6 n/%	7 n/%
1. To further improve my knowledge or skills of library activities	27/29	54/59
14. To develop new professional knowledge and skills	35/38	43/47
16. To help me keep abreast of new developments in my position	39/42	30/32
8. To accommodate more effectively the needs of patrons	40/43	26/28
18. To help me become more competent in my work	28/30	34/37
3. To help me to be more productive in my job position	28/30	34/37

Table 5
Statement Receiving Endorsements of 1-2 (Not Important)
1-2= (Not Important) 3-5 (Mod. Important) 6-7 (Very Important)
N=91

Statement	1 n/%	2 n/%
6. To help family and friends with library service	14/15	19/20
21 To enhance the image of my profession	5/5	11/12
24. To enhance my indivial job security in my present library position	10/10	7/7
10. To increase the likelihood of receiving a raise in salary	9/9	3/2
15. To sharpen my perspective of my job position	2/2	8/8
26. To reflect on the value of my library responsibilities	6/6	7/7

Table 6
Statements Regarding Professional Competence
1-2=(Not Important) 3-5 (Mod. Important) 6-7 (Very Important)
N=91

Statement	1 n/%	2 n/%	3 n/%	4 n/%	5 n/%	6 n/%	7 n/%
14. To develop new professional..	1/1	1/1	1/1	8/8	23/25	32/35	25/27
18. To help me become more....	1/1	0/0	2/2	10/10	16/17	28/91	34/37
3. To help me be more productive..	0/0	1/1	1/1	10/10	17/18	28/30	34/37
16. To help me keep abreast....	1/1	0/0	0/0	9/9	12/13	39/42	30/32
25. To maintain the quality....	3/3	0/0	1/1	12/13	23/25	25/27	27/29
23. To develop new proficiencies...	1/1	1/1	1/1	8/8	23/25	32/35	25/27

Table 7
Statements Regarding Patron Service
N=91

Statement	1 n/%	2 n/%	3 n/%	4 n/%	5 n/%	6 n/%	7 n/%
8. To accommodate..	1/1	1/1	2/2	5/5	16/17	40/43	26/28
4. To enable me to better...	1/1	1/1	2/2	11/12	18/19	28/30	30/32
17. To help increase the likelihood...	1/1	0/1	3/3	6/6	23/25	30/32	28/30
13. To increase my skills in dealing....	2/2	3/3	2/2	11/12	15/16	32/35	26/28
22. To improve my service to the public.	2/2	2/2	3/3	8/8	23/25	32/35	25/27

Table 8
Statements Regarding Colleagues
N=91

1-2=(Not Important) 3-5=(Mod. Important) 6-7 (Very Important)

Statement	1 n/%	2 n/%	3 n/%	4 n/%	5 n/%	6 n/%	7 n/%
20. To be challenged...	2/2	2/2	12/13	14/15	31/34	15/16	15/16
2. To mutually exchange...	1/1	2/2	7/7	11/12	29/31	20/21	21/21
11. To learn from others with similar...	1/1	1/1	3/3	3/3	21/23	41/45	21/23
7. To relate my ideas to my peers.	3/3	3/91	12/13	20/21	25/27	17/18	11/12
12. To develop leadership....	3/3	1/1	2/2	13/14	26/28	33/36	13/14
15. To sharpen my perspective of my position.	2/2	8/8	9/9	10/10	17/18	30/31	15/16
21. To enhance the image of my profession.	5/5	11/12	9/9	20/21	17/18	16/17	13/14

Table 9
Statements Regarding Personal Development
N=91
1-2= (Not Important) 3-5 (Mod. Important) 6-7 (Very Important)

Statement	1 n/%	2 n/%	3 n/%	4 n/%	5 n/%	6 n/%	7 n/%
10. To increase the likelihood..	9/9	3/3	12/13	18/19	17/18	14/15	17/18
19. To increase the likelihood..	3/3	2/2	7/7	13/14	7/7	21/23	28/30
24. To enhance my individual job security....	10/10	7/7	16/17	14/15	17/18	17/18	10/10
6. To help family and friends...	14/15	19/20	17/18	16/17	18/19	4/4	3/3
26. To reflect on the value of my library...	6/6	7/7	12/13	22/24	18/19	17/18	9/9
9. To review my commitment to my job position.	9/9	7/7	7/97	16/17	13/14	24/26	15/16
1. To further improve my knowledge..	1/1	0/0	0/0	4/4	5/5	27/29	54/59
3. To help me be more productive in my job...	0/0	1/1	1/1	10/10	17/18	28/30	34/37
5. To maintain my current abilities.	2/2	4/4	6/6	16/17	16/17	19/20	25/27

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